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THE TEACHER AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT.

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TO ASCERTAIN THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD GROUP PROCESS, AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF TEACHERS WAS ASKED TO WRITE AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PROCESS AS THEY UNDERSTOOD IT. THEY ALSO RATED THEMSELVES ON A 5-POINT SCALE, RANGING FROM STRONGLY FAVORABLE TO STRONGLY OPPOSED ATTITUDES, AND BY WHICH THE ACCOUNTS WERE GROUPED. A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ACCOUNTS WAS MADE TO DISCOVER THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH THEY WERE MENTIONED. IT WAS FOUND THAT (1) A TEACHER'S ROLE IN GROUP PROCESS WAS MOST OFTEN CITED BY TEACHERS WHO WERE NEUTRAL, OR MODERATELY OR STRONGLY OPPOSED, (2) TEACHERS WHO WERE STRONGLY OR MODERATELY FAVORABLE OR NEUTRAL CONSIDERED THE CHILD'S ROLE MOST FREQUENTLY, (3) MODERATELY AND STRONGLY FAVORABLE TEACHERS MOST OFTEN MENTIONED GROUP PROCESS AS IMPORTANT, (4) GROUP PROCESS WAS CONSIDERED SYNONOMOUS WITH GROUPING FOR INSTRUCTION BY NEUTRAL AND MODERATELY AND STRONGLY OPPOSED TEACHERS, (5) NEUTRAL AND STRONGLY OPPOSED TEACHERS MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED THEIR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF GROUP PROCESS, AND MOST OFTEN PERCEIVED A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GROUP PROCESS AND DISCIPLINE. IT IS CONCLUDED THAT (A) TEACHERS, DURING THEIR PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION, SHOULD HAVE GROUP PROCESS EXPERIENCE, AND (B) THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES SHOULD BE MORE EXTENSIVELY STUDIED. PAPER READ AT ANNUAL CONVOCATION ON EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (6TH, OCTOBER 19, 1965). (AW)

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THE TEACHER AND GROUP DEVELOPMENT

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Group process refers to the responses and reactions of persons to each other in face to face relationships. It involves the creation of constructive human relations in a group as individual members think, feel, discuss, plan, judge, decide, and act together.

Some basic assumptions underlying the group process in the elementary school are:

1. A good learning situation is one in which the teacher considers the feelings and emotions of the children in creating work, study, and play groups.

2. The teacher ought to be aware that every class is composed of many small, natural, informal groups (substructures) created out of mutual needs, nearness, desires, and those qualities of attraction-repulsion which are involved in human relationships.

3. The teacher needs to know and to be sensitive to the ways of discovering the structure and culture of a classroom society in order to gain access to the child's intuitive life.

4. The teacher who is aware of the group process is concerned with, and sensitive to, the spontaneous interactions and intersubjective responses as children move from leadership to followership in the classroom. She studies the development of acceptance-rejection patterns, and the group code and mores that influence group behavior.

5. The teacher, with the cooperation of the members of the group, creates a unity of effort and the growth of a "we" reality.

6. The teacher who develops group process in her classroom helps children understand and develop democratic values and standards to guide their relationships with each other.

The respondents were asked to write an account indicating their general attitudes toward group process as they understood it. Each person was also asked to rate himself on a 5-point scale representing strongly favorable, moderately favorable, neutral, moderately opposed, and strongly opposed attitudes.

The complete and unedited written accounts were grouped according to the respondent's self-rated attitudes: strongly favorable, moderately favorable, neutral, moderately opposed, and strongly opposed.

A content analysis was made to discover what perceptions of group process teachers had and with what frequency they occurred in the written accounts.

Conclusions:

The teachers in this study had differing perceptions of group process in terms of their self-rated attitudes. A content analysis of the teachers' written accounts showed that the perception of group process as a method, technique, tool, or instructional aid occurred with minor variation in frequency in terms of the teachers' self-rated attitudes.

A teacher's role in group process was most frequently mentioned by those teachers who were neutral, moderately opposed or strongly favorable in attitude. Teachers who were strongly favorable, moderately favorable, or neutral considered the child's role most frequently.

Group process was mentioned as important or valuable with greatest frequency by teachers who were strongly favorable or moderately favorable in attitude. The contribution of group process to social relationships and the child's total development was noted most frequently by teachers strongly in favor of group process.

Group process was considered synonymous with grouping for instruction with greatest frequency by teachers who were neutral or moderately opposed or strongly opposed in attitude. The perception of group process as limited to special children, groups, or circumstances was mentioned most frequently by teachers who were neutral or moderately opposed in attitude.

Teachers who were neutral or strongly opposed to group process most frequently mentioned their lack of knowledge, understanding, or experience with group process. Those teachers who were moderately opposed or strongly opposed in attitude most frequently mentioned the dangers of mis-use, over-use, or over-emphasis of group process. The relationship between group process and discipline was most frequently perceived by the teachers who were neutral or strongly opposed in attitude.

Implications:

Teachers, as part of their professional preparation, ought to have group process experiences as members of T groups or similar "sensitivity" training programs. They ought to be encouraged to develop "group observation" skills and their perceptions and attitudes ought to be more extensively studied.